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THE ALDINE.

JAMES SUTTON & CO., Publishers,

23 LIBERTY STREET, NEW YORK.

\$5.00 per Annum (with chrono.)

Single Copies, 50 Cents.

LIVERWORTS.

THEY are laughing in the meadow,
They are smiling in the dell;
Upon the woody hill-tops
The blue-eyed beauties dwell:
And unto those who love them
A pleasant tale they tell.

They speak of sunny weather,
Of birds and babbling brooks,
Of walks within the forest glens,
And rest within its nooks,
And many a dreamy fancy
Recorded not in books.

From fallen leaves and withered
They mischievously peep,
And laugh at later flowers
Unwakened from their sleep,
While tenderly they guard them,
And loving vigil keep.

In modest maiden beauty
Some blush along the way,
While others fleck the meadows
Or by the fountains stray,
In white or blue habiliments
To greet the April day.

They seem at frolic ever,
Now hiding from my sight,
And then together clustering
As if in half affright,
Yet conscious of their holiday,
And happy in the light.

No other coming flowers
To me are dear as they,
Of those that bloom in April,
Or in the genial May;
I would that thus to comfort me
They evermore would stay!

For tales of vanished childhood
To me they sweetly sing,
And to the fading memory
They recollections bring
Of home and loving faces—
A precious offering.

Unplucked I leave them growing
Full thick about my feet;
I cannot call them toward
From out their fair retreat;
No refuge has the city
For anything so sweet.

The story that they tell me
Of pleasure and content,
Of hope and trusting confidence
However faith is bent—
This lesson I can bear away—
To teach it they were sent.

— W. W. Bailey.

POETS' RIVERS.

A PLEASANT paper might be written about the rivers that poets have celebrated, but it would exceed the space we could give it in *THE ALDINE*, especially if we followed them, as we should be tempted to, through the epical landscapes of old. Turning our backs, therefore, with reluctance, upon the poets of Greece and Rome, let us see what the English poets have said about rivers. We might find an occasional mention of them by earlier singers than Spenser—we should say, at a venture, that several are mentioned by Chaucer, probably foreign ones, as well as by Gower, and Lydgate; but, for all practical purposes, we will begin with Spenser. Spenser is the poet of rivers, as he is the poet of everything beautiful in nature, but his descriptions are not accurate enough to satisfy topographers, though they are generally poetical enough to satisfy poets. One of his earliest pieces, an *Epithalamion* on the Thames, is lost, but his love of the Thames, which was never lost, re-appears in that noble spousal verse, his *Prothalamion*, each stanza of which closes with this refrain,

"Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song."

He introduced the marriage of the Thames and the Medway in Canto XI. of the Fourth Book of the "Fairie Queene," and a brilliant pageant it really is, crowded with the most famous rivers in the world. Spenser's own river was the Mulla, which ran near

his Irish estate, the Castle of Kilcolman, and it is lovingly dwelt upon in the "Fairie Queene."

"And Mulla, whose wild waves I whilom taught to weep."

In "Colin Clout's Come Home Again," he speaks of keeping his sheep

"amongst the coolly shade
Of the green alders by the Mullaes shore;"

and in his own marriage song there is an address to the nymphs of the Mulla, which is charming. The geographical name of the Mulla is the Awbeg.

Most of Milton's rivers flow through the world of antiquity, which was native to his austere and learned genius. The Lady in "Comus" is as learned as himself; for, in her first Song, she invokes the nymph Echo from her airy shell,

"By slow Meander's margent green."

The attendant Spirit, however, if less learned, is more English, for he is content to summon to his aid the nymph of the Severn:

"Sabrina fair
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honor's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save."

We find the Hebrus and the Mincius in "Lycidas;" but we, also, find the Deva, and we have the incomparable figure of the Cam:

"Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with wo."

We do not find much love of nature in Milton's contemporaries, though there are some good landscapes and figure-pieces, and brief glimpses of rivers, and river scenery, in Browne's "Britannia's Pastorals." They abound in Drayton's "Polyolbion," and in Warner's "England's Albion," but it would not pay us to search them out, meandering as they do through interminable swamps of verse. Nor would it pay us to continue the search through the poets of that period; or of the period of Dryden and Pope. Collins mentions the Avon, but it is on account of Otway, who was born along its side, as he mentions the Thames, on account of Thomson:

"Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore,
When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing oar,
To bid his gentle spirit rest."

Goldsmith incidentally mentions three or four of the European rivers in his "Traveller," as the lazy Scheld, the wandering Po, the Arno, and the Loire. Gray was too much of a bookman to care for nature, for itself, so he merely apostrophises and questions the Thames:

"Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen;"

and speaks of the "lucid Avon" as the stream by which Shakspeare was born.

Cowper's river is the Ouse, but it glitters through fewer pages of "The Task" than we expected. We have a glimpse of it in Book I.

"Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast-rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlooked, our favorite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut:
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds."

We should not expect to find many rivers mentioned by Burns; for though he was gifted with a keen observation of nature, and a graphic power of describing it, when he chose, he generally subordinated these rare gifts to his necessity of passionate expression. We find, nevertheless, that they frequently flow, side by side, with his warmest tides of emotion, and none so deeply as the Ayr. It was on its banks that he parted with Highland Mary:

"That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity will not efface
Those records dear of transport past,
Thy image at our last embrace—
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!"

The same year that Burns celebrated his beloved Ayr, a young and unknown contemporary of his, Wordsworth, composed a poem on the Thames, in remembrance of Collins, as Collins himself, some forty years before, had composed a poem on the

Thames, in memory of Thomson. Nine years later, — viz., in 1798—Wordsworth wrote his famous Lines on revisiting Tintern Abbey, in which he refers to the river Wye,

"O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!"

Five years later he made a tour in Scotland, during which he wrote a characteristic poem on the river Yarrow, which he refused to visit, lest he should be disenchanted of the poetic romance which clung to it. When eleven years had passed, and he finally visited the Yarrow, he was not disappointed with it:

"But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation:
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy."

Besides these two poems in praise of the Yarrow, Wordsworth wrote a series of sonnets on the river Duddon; and, later in life, other sonnets and poems in which he refers to the Dee, the Deva, the Clyde, Greta, Eden, and other English streams.

There is a sonnet addressed to the river Otter in Coleridge's "Sibylline Leaves,"

"Dear native brook! wild streamlet of the West!"

The river which is most characteristic of Coleridge's genius is the Alph of his "Kubla Khan." Forced through a romantic chasm, in the shape of a mighty fountain, it flung up from the panting earth below fragments of enormous rocks that rebounded like hail, or grain from the flail of the thresher:

"Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!"

Byron's descriptions of Nature are the most remarkable in English poetry. No one has written so nobly of the Ocean; and when in the sweep of his song a river rushes past him it is with elemental life and force. Whether he wanders with his deathless Pilgrim by the arrowy Rhone, or the wide and winding Rhine; or contrasts his troubled being with the clear placid waters of Lake Lemman, or stands in an ecstasy of terror by the dreadful Cataract of Velino;—whenever he is in the presence of waters he is unapproachably grand. His river, *par excellence*—for he loved many rivers—is the Po; not the wandering river of poor, simple Goldsmith, but the wild, turbulent stream which mirrored his own heart, and the passionate thoughts he committed to its waves, freighted with his adoration of Madame Guiccioli:

"The current I behold will sweep beneath
Her native walls and murmur at her feet;
Her eyes all look on thee, when she shall breathe
The twilight air, unharmed by summer's heat.

"She will look on thee—I have looked on thee
Full of that thought; and from that moment, ne'er
Thy waters could I dream of, name, or see,
Without the inseparable sigh for her!"

The poets of America have their rivers as well as the poets of England, and have celebrated them in their songs. Drake has sung of the Bronx; Halleck and Brainard have sung of the Connecticut; Emerson has sung of the Concord; Longfellow and Lowell have sung of the Charles; Whittier has sung of the Merrimack; and Bryant has sung of Green River.

Mr. Bryant is the most American of all our poets, and in nothing so much as in the fidelity with which he has reproduced our forests and rivers. "Green River," which we print elsewhere, with the graphic illustrations expressly executed for *THE ALDINE*, is one of his earliest poems. It was written, if we may credit the author of a Life of Bryant in "Homes of American Authors," in or before 1821—his twenty-seventh year—for in that year it appeared in a small volume of his poems published at Cambridge. The same author states that it was contributed to Dana's "Idle Man," which was commenced in 1824. We cannot reconcile these statements, except on the supposition that it was copied by Dana into the "Idle Man" from the volume in question. "Green River" is, we think, the best poem of which a single river is the subject—a simple, pastoral river-piece; but it is not the best river-piece which Mr. Bryant has painted. We prefer portions of his "Rivulet" to it; and it is certainly inferior to his thoughtful and imaginative "Night Journey of a River."